



## EXPOSURE AND DISEASE REGISTRIES

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- About 40,000 hazardous waste sites have been reported to the federal government. Additionally, there are thousands of unplanned releases of toxins into the environment each year.
- More than 1,600 hazardous waste sites are included on the National Priorities List (NPL) and are targeted for clean up by the Environmental Protection Agency. About 15 million people live within 1 mile of NPL sites.
- Exposure registries offer a way to catalog health effects that might be associated with exposure to substances.

### WHAT HAS ATSDR ACCOMPLISHED?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) created the National Exposure Registry (NER), which records and follows reported health information from persons with documented exposures to specific hazardous substances. The information is collected according to chemical-specific registries. These registries are designed to aid in assessing the long-term health consequences of low-level, long-term exposures to hazardous chemicals identified at hazardous waste sites. NER consists of four established registries: Trichloroethylene, Dioxin, Trichloroethane, and Benzene. Registrants on all four registries have reported increases of such problems as anemia, other blood disorders, and urinary tract disorders. Other conditions that appear on at least three of the registries include skin rashes, eczema, other skin allergies, and stroke. ATSDR shares registry information with participants so that they can make informed decisions about their health. ATSDR also analyzes information gathered from the exposure registries to identify opportunities for future health studies. For example, analysis of the approximately 5,000 female registrants across all registries revealed a statistically significant increase in several conditions, such as diabetes, kidney problems, liver problems, and urinary tract disorders.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

To date, 666 workers and 1,765 household contacts that are still living have been identified. ATSDR is in the process of expanding the NER website to include all NER publications and the information collected for NER (without personal identifiers) to allow other researchers the opportunity to use the data in their own research. ATSDR will continue to work with the current registries, expanding the number of participants as appropriate.

ATSDR is investigating the formation of disease registries to facilitate the identification and evaluation of specific health outcomes (e.g., multiple sclerosis, Parkinson disease) that might be associated with exposure to hazardous substances in the environment. In 2002, ATSDR began a tracking project to locate and determine the vital status of former workers of industry sites where exposures have been recorded. To date, 666 workers and 1,765 household contacts that are still living have been identified. For example, ATSDR is developing a Tremolite Asbestos Registry for people who were exposed to tremolite asbestos (a type of asbestos that contaminated vermiculite mined in Libby, Montana). The registry will include former vermiculite workers in Libby, their household contacts, and people who have participated in ATSDR's medical testing program in Libby. ATSDR will continue to help the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene develop the World Trade Center Registry, which will follow the health of persons most exposed to the events and aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attack. ATSDR will strengthen its collaborations with the Pew Environmental Health Commission and other public health professionals to offer solutions to surveillance challenges cited in Pew's 2000 report, *America's Environmental Health Gap*.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/program](http://www.cdc.gov/program)

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